

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS

We're excited because we are about to celebrate Easter Sunday. Easter is, in reality our Fourth of July; our freedom in Christ. It is resurrection to newness of life, the old things have passed away behold all things have become new.

God offers life, but not an improved old life. This life He offers is life out of death (spiritual life) called the new birth or being "born again". The cross that ended the earthly life of Jesus now puts an end to the life of the sinner who receives Him; and the power that raised Christ from the dead now raises the "born again believer" to a new life in Christ.

The cross is a symbol of death. ***It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being.*** The cross made no compromise and spared nothing, and when it had finished its work the man was no more.

That's what Jesus meant when he said in **Matthew 16** with some paraphrasing from the greek **vs 24** if anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny (refuse input) from his old life and take up his cross and follow Me. **vs 25** for whoever desires to save his [old] life will lose it, and whoever loses his [old] life (puts it to death) for My sake will find it.

Take time to read **Romans 6**; notice here some verses, I also include some of my renditions from the greek text:

vs 3 As many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **vs 4** buried with him through baptism into His death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father, even so we also shall be in the likeness of his resurrection.

vs 6 paraphrased from the greek: knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him that the natural body that holds the nature to sin might be rendered inoperative that we should no longer be slaves of the sin nature living in the natural body.

vs 7 for he (born again believer) who has died [on the cross] has been freed, (cleared) from [the authority or rule of the] sin [nature](its demands and passions).

vs 12 Therefore do not let sin [nature] reign (rule) in your mortal body, that you should obey in its lusts.

vs 14 for sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Now to plainly identify what Easter means to us:

Looking at **2 Corinthians 5:18** with more greek paraphrases included:

vs 18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation (to be invited from being his enemy to friend)

vs 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them (to log in account against mankind) and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. **vs 20** therefore we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. (take the offer) **vs 21** for He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Resurrection and reconciliation: this is the good news of the Gospel of Jesus! This Easter and the days following, let's not just be reminded of the power of what Jesus did, but actively living in the reality of it.

Happy Easter,

JANN T. BUTLER

